

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Status of Claims:

Claims 1 and 9-17 are currently being cancelled.

No claims are currently being amended or added.

This amendment and reply cancels claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claims remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

After canceling the claims as set forth above, claims 1-8, 18 and 19 are now pending in this application.

Indication of Allowable Subject Matter:

Applicant appreciates the indication of allowable subject matter made in the Office Action with respect to claims 2-4, 18 and 19.

Request for Rejoinder of Non-elected Claims 5-8:

Applicants respectfully request rejoinder of method claims 5-8 in accordance with MPEP 821.04 and *In re Ochiai*, 71 F.3d 1565, 37 USPQ2d 1127 (Fed.Cir. 1995). Please note that withdrawn method claim 5 has been amended to include all of the features of allowed “connecting structure” claim 2, and thus it qualifies to be rejoined (along with its dependent claims 6-8).

Claim Rejections – Prior Art:

In the Office Action, claims 1, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Patent Application 06-123204. Due to the cancellation of claims 1, 16 and 17, this rejection is now moot.

Conclusion:

Since all of the issues raised in the Office Action have been addressed in this Amendment and Reply, Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and an early indication of allowance is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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